# THE DISCUSSION

*Where Voices Matter, Stories Unfold*

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# Sudan in Flames: The El-Fasher Massacre and the Collapse of a Nation

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*Smoke rises over Khartoum as conflict between military factions continues to devastate Sudan's capital and beyond.*

The story of Sudan today is one of a nation in collapse — a once-promising country now torn apart by its own guardians. What began as a political disagreement between two military leaders has spiraled into one of the world's most devastating humanitarian disasters. Across the dusty streets of Khartoum and

the scorched plains of Darfur, the sound of gunfire and the cries of the displaced have replaced the rhythm of everyday life.

In our discussion, "Sudan in Flames: The El-Fasher Massacre and the Collapse of a Nation," we sought to go beyond the surface — beyond the headlines of war and the statistics of suffering — to uncover the human, political, and historical realities behind Sudan's descent into chaos.

## The Roots of the War

Sudan's tragedy did not begin overnight. It is the culmination of decades of fragile governance, broken promises, and deep-seated divisions. After the ouster of long-time ruler Omar al-Bashir in 2019, Sudan seemed poised for change. A transitional government was formed, promising democracy, stability, and unity. Yet beneath this fragile peace lay a dangerous divide — one between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as "Hemeti."

*General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo "Hemeti" — two generals whose rivalry plunged Sudan into war.*

The RSF, born from the infamous Janjaweed militias that once terrorized Darfur, had grown into a formidable force. With its own command structure, funding networks, and foreign backers, it operated almost as a state within a state. When plans were made to integrate the RSF into the regular army, disputes over hierarchy and timing erupted. Mutual mistrust between the two generals turned political competition into open war in April 2023.

Within weeks, the fighting engulfed Sudan. Khartoum — once a bustling capital of commerce and culture — became a battlefield. Electricity, communication, and healthcare systems collapsed. Civilians were trapped in their homes, powerless as artillery shells fell. The war soon spread westward, reviving the ghosts of Darfur, where some of the deadliest atrocities in the early 2000s had taken place.

## El-Fasher: A City Under Fire

Nowhere has the horror been more visible than in El-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur. Once a hub for traders and displaced families seeking refuge, El-Fasher became the center of unimaginable violence. Reports from humanitarian groups and eyewitnesses describe RSF fighters surrounding the city, cutting off roads, and launching assaults that killed hundreds.

Entire neighborhoods were reduced to rubble. Civilians — including women and children — were shot, beaten, or burned alive. Markets were looted, hospitals destroyed, and aid warehouses emptied. The

massacre that unfolded there has been described by the United Nations as one of the darkest chapters of Sudan's modern history. Satellite images revealed mass graves. Survivors spoke of fleeing through burning streets, hiding for days without food or water.

*Displaced families in Darfur face an uncertain future as the conflict continues.*

El-Fasher was not just a military target; it was a message — a brutal demonstration of control, power, and impunity. For many Sudanese, it symbolized the complete collapse of state authority and the international community's inability to protect the innocent.

## The Collapse of a Nation

The war has effectively dismantled Sudan's institutions. There is no functioning central government. Banks and schools are closed, and hospitals operate only where volunteers risk their lives. The economy has crumbled. More than 12 million people are displaced, with hundreds of thousands fleeing to Chad, Egypt, and South Sudan. Aid agencies describe Sudan as one of the world's largest humanitarian crises, yet access to affected areas remains nearly impossible.

In our discussion, we asked difficult questions: How did Sudan get here? Could this war have been prevented?

The answers are painful. Sudan's leadership crisis, compounded by decades of corruption, ethnic manipulation, and foreign interference, created fertile ground for conflict. Regional powers have supported different sides — some supplying weapons, others offering quiet political backing — turning Sudan into a proxy battleground for influence and resources.

The failure of international diplomacy has also been glaring. Despite countless statements, ceasefire attempts, and peace summits, there is still no unified global response. Humanitarian appeals remain underfunded, and accountability for atrocities, including the El-Fasher massacre, is slow to materialize.

## Voices from the Ground

Behind every statistic lies a human face. Mothers carrying children across deserts. Doctors performing surgeries without anesthesia. Teachers turning refugee tents into makeshift classrooms. These are the people holding Sudan together — not politicians or generals, but ordinary citizens.

> *"We thought the world would come. We thought someone would stop them. But no one came."*

One survivor from El-Fasher told international monitors, "We thought the world would come. We thought someone would stop them. But no one came."

It is in these voices that the true story of Sudan is written — not in the military statements or international reports, but in the quiet endurance of those who refuse to give up hope.

## Lessons and Responsibility

As reflected in our discussion, Sudan's fall is not only a national tragedy; it is a continental warning. It shows what happens when power becomes personal, when leaders prioritize control over compassion, and when the world turns away from a crisis because it seems too complicated to solve.

Africa must learn from Sudan. We must strengthen early-warning systems, empower regional diplomacy, and hold leaders accountable before nations crumble. For the international community, the lesson is equally clear: silence costs lives.

## Hope Amid Despair

Yet even in despair, hope flickers. Sudan's youth — many of whom led the 2019 revolution — continue to organize, speak out, and document atrocities at great personal risk. Civil society networks work tirelessly to deliver aid, rebuild trust, and envision a postwar future. Their courage proves that Sudan's story is not yet finished.

In our conclusion, we agreed on one truth: justice must be the foundation of peace. Without accountability for war crimes — from Khartoum to El-Fasher — Sudan cannot heal. The world must support investigations, preserve evidence, and ensure that the victims of massacres are not forgotten.

## A Final Reflection

"Sudan in Flames: The El-Fasher Massacre and the Collapse of a Nation" is more than a discussion; it is a reminder of what happens when humanity looks away. It is an urgent call for empathy, awareness, and action. Sudan's pain should not be just another news cycle — it should be a collective wake-up call for Africa and the world.

Because somewhere, amid the ruins of El-Fasher, amid the silence after the gunfire, there are still people waiting — waiting for food, for peace, for justice, and above all, for someone to listen.

*And The Discussion listens.*

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